



**Interest Group on Mental health, Well-being  
and Brain Disorders  
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**Alcohol and mental health**

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# GAMIAN-Europe:

- Is a patient-driven pan-European organization that represents the interests of persons affected by mental illness and advocates their rights.
- Brings together and supports the development and capacity building of local, regional and national patient organizations active in the field of mental health

# What does GAMIAN-Europe do:





# Why is alcohol dependence important to GE?

Alcohol is one of the main risk factors for more than 60 types of disease, including mental disorders:

## **Depression:**

- Alcohol is a depressant drug.
- Prolonged drinking can lead to profound and long lasting mood swings.
- Symptoms of alcohol induced depression can be severe, often leading to misdiagnosis of depression instead of alcohol dependence

## **Brain damage and cognitive deficits**

### **Anxiety:**

- Often anxiety is consequence of heavy drinking rather than a cause.
- High doses of alcohol increase psychological distress

### **Suicide:**

- The risk of suicide when a person is drinking is 8 times greater (WHO)



# Why is alcohol dependence important to GE?

- Prevalence of alcohol dependence and share of the burden: alcohol dependence is estimated to affect **14.6 million people** in Europe, many of which are in their most productive years
  - Costs of alcohol related-harm: **€155 billion** (a majority of which lie outside the healthcare system)
- Alcohol dependence is a problem for society and not just for those that are dependent



# Why is alcohol dependence important to GE?

- In the Gamian Survey on Physical and Mental Health (2011) more than 1.000 patients were questioned
  - Two out of Three (66,96%) said that they had to watch their alcohol consumption.
  - This was the highest score of all issues (food, smoke, exercise, etc...)
- Only one out of Eight (12,89%) felt concerned about their alcohol consumption



# Why is alcohol dependence important to GE?

**Diagnosis rates** of alcohol dependence:

these are extremely low, i.e. only 15% are diagnosed

**Treatment rates of alcohol dependence:**

- in Europe, only 8% of people with alcohol dependence receive treatment;
- up to 75% will relapse within the first year



# What can the EU do?

GAMIAN-Europe would like to join stakeholders calling for a renewed and comprehensive EU Alcohol Strategy.

This should:

- take account of the impact of alcohol on mental health and vice versa and recognize alcohol dependence as a mental disorder.
- include targets on prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of alcohol-related harm that covers the lifespan of citizens

Today's meeting can support such a call.





## GAMIAN-Europe research:

The Interest Group on Mental Health; Well-being and Brain Disorders can support its colleague MEPs in tabling a [Resolution](#) calling for the renewal of the EU Alcohol Strategy and to support an early adoption of the planned Alcohol Action Plan.

GAMIAN-Europe, coordinating the Interest Group, is ready to play its part.



# GAMIAN-Europe research:

## The importance of patient consultations/involvement:

- No academic ambition
- Find out what lives amongst patients
- Provide a realistic foundation for patients representatives to express “the patients view” in advocacy activities.
- Helps to inform policy makers to understand desirability and outcomes of policies
- Helps to inform patients on ongoing policy initiatives/research
- Supports dissemination of results of research projects
- Helps clinicians to know the extent to which patients views can positively or adversely influence therapeutic outcomes.
- Defining targets for health promotion strategies.



# GAMIAN-Europe research:

**Thank you!**

[www.gamian.eu](http://www.gamian.eu)